

THE

# HISTORIAN



OF HANCOCK COUNTY

[www.hancockcountyhistoricalsociety.com](http://www.hancockcountyhistoricalsociety.com)

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

October 2024

## COMING EVENTS AT LOBRANO HOUSE

The monthly luncheon meeting will be held on Thursday, October 17, at noon at the Kate Lobrano House. The guest speakers will be board members and volunteers who wish to tell their favorite Halloween stories. **Reservations are required** and may be made by calling 228-467-4090. **Please call by noon on Wednesday, October 16**, to make your reservation. Seating is limited to forty-eight (48) people, and we need to order the correct number of lunches. **Served at noon, lunch is \$15.00 for members and \$17.00 for nonmembers**, payable at the door. The catering order is submitted on Wednesday at noon prior to the luncheon on Thursday. If you need to cancel your reservation, please call by noon on Wednesday prior to the luncheon if at all possible so that the society does not incur unnecessary expenses. It is catered by Almost Home Catering with Chef Michelle Nichols. The lunch menu is chicken piccata, buttered pasta, salad, yeast rolls, and Mississippi mud desert.

It is time to consider nominations for board members to serve from January 2025 to December 2026. If you would like to nominate someone, please call 228-467-4090 or nominate from the floor at the November meeting. Voting will take place at that meeting. The nominating committee has selected Georgie Morton for Secretary, Beverly Frater for Treasurer, Bryan Frater for Membership, Candee Canady for Member at Large, and Bert Young for Member at Large AV.



Elmwood Manor (Plantation) was built in 1830 in a classic French Creole colonial design.

## LEGEND OF THE PURPLE LADY

By  
Kit Roth

*As told to Kit Roth by Harriet Gorman, a multigenerational employee of the Camors family.*

The Purple Lady haunts the stables of Elmwood Plantation and the “pig yard” in the rear of an adjacent property originally owned by Yvonne Loeliger Camors, wife of Victor Camors. I say “haunts” because she can fill the atmosphere with her presence, even today.

Chapter 1

Elmwood and the Civil War

Elmwood Plantation was completed c.1830. During the war, the plantation home became a hospital for Confederate soldiers. The wounded men hopped, or they were carried into the vast center hall, where they moaned and cried out in pain while waiting for care. Of course, there were never enough doctors to tend to these mangled men. The few nurses seemed like angels as they comforted the dying and dribbled drops of water on their parched, cracked lips. The nurses patiently listened to the tearful hoarse whispers speaking of loved ones far away, and they wrote letters home for those who asked. There was one particularly beautiful nurse angel. She had lovely dark hair and wore a loose lavender gown. Her movements were silent and soft, and her long arms seemed so frail, yet she

## THE

**HISTORIAN**

OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Eddie Coleman, Editor  
James Keating, PublisherPublished monthly by the  
**HANCOCK COUNTY  
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Marianne Pluim, Webmaster**LOBRANO HOUSE  
HOURS**MONDAY — FRIDAY  
10:00AM — 3:00PM**CLOSED 12—1 (lunch)****MISSION STATEMENT**

“TO PRESERVE THE GENERAL AND ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY OF HANCOCK COUNTY AND TO PRESERVE THE KATE LOBRANO HOUSE AND COLLECTIONS THEREIN; TO RESEARCH AND INTERPRET LIFE IN HANCOCK COUNTY; AND TO ENCOURAGE AN APPRECIATION OF AND INTEREST IN HISTORICAL PRESERVATION.”

could lift the heaviest of men. She was partial to a soldier from Louisiana. He had been severely wounded and had such a huge hole in his chest that it prompted her to murmur, “I can see right into your heart.”

The soldier smiled weakly at her humor and replied, “It belongs to you now. My heart and my life are in your hands.” She gently covered this gaping wound, tearing a strip off her lavender gown, as there were no more clean bandages available. She leaned her head down to listen to the faint heartbeat and in that moment fell completely in love with the dying soldier. She whispered in his ear, “I will protect and care for you now and forever.”

Days went by, and the soldier improved slightly. He called his now beloved nurse “my lavender lady” because his heart was wrapped in her pale purple gown.

One night when the moon was full and the skies were bathed

in its warm glow, the soldier slept fretfully, and his painful anguish awakened the lavender lady. And when she bent over to caress his brow, she heard the distant toll of Our Lady of the Gulf’s church bells. She listened attentively.... It was the alarm toll!

“The Yankees are coming!”

She cried out loudly. Immediately the plantation echoed with shouts of panic. She thought only of her love, and half-lifted the soldier with her strong arms and dragged him up the wide staircase to the second floor. As the Yankees burst through the front door, she quickly pulled him up the small staircase leading to the attic, but there was no place to hide. The moon flooded through the dormer windows. Hurriedly she unlatched one and pushed him out onto a small balcony.

The bumping and lurching had caused his deep wound to open, and his blood drenched both of them. It had also left a trail on the stairs. She tried to stop the bleed-

**President’s Corner**

The Society’s presentation of the play *Sink Or Be Sunk*” was well received by approximately 700 attendees which included over 300 students at the Friday morning performance. This play, as well as last years Orphan Train, is part of our mission to inform and educate our members and the public about the history of Hancock County.

It is essential that we continue to raise awareness about the importance of the Society and our mission to preserve the history of Hancock County. In addition to our traditional product offerings, we have expanded focus to include book publications. Visit our website to see our book offerings.

On a more somber note, we were saddened to learn of the passing of our former board member, Leianna “Lea” Young on September 10, 2024. Lea was not only a contributor to our society but to numerous other organizations during her lifetime. She will be missed by all.

*“If at first you don’t succeed then skydiving definitely isn’t for you.”*  
Steven Wright

Chris Roth  
President



Russell Guerin studies the ballast stones carried in the hulls of ships to improve their floating stability that transported the building materials used to build Elmwood Manor.

ing, but it was too late. The soldier gasped his last breath just as two Yankees charged through the attic door. Defiantly, the lavender lady stood; her bloody gown gleamed purple in the moonlight. With arms outstretched she wailed "You will cause my death in this life but never my spirit. Elmwood Plantation is mine forever."

A Yankee soldier yelled "get that Purple Lady!" But she turned and leapt over the balcony. The soldiers watched the dark-haired woman with her flowing purple gown disappear through the moonlit sky. The soldiers told the strange and frightening story to their captain, and fearing Voodoo or witchery, he ordered his troops to quickly round up the remaining people. A grave was dug in the pig yard across the street, and the dead soldier was buried there. The body of the purple lady was never found which caused much terror and speculation. As abruptly as they had come, the Yankee troops marched from Elmwood.

## Chapter 2 Elmwood owned by the Richards

The house remained empty until E. V. Richards purchased the property and restored it to its earlier grandeur. Oddly enough, he hired Harriet and "Fat" Paul Gorman and their son Paul Alexander Gorman as caretakers.

E. V. was a movie producer, and when guests saw the eerie purple lady flow in and out of the moonlight above the back stables, they thought it was part of a set design for one of his movies. E. V. who loved a delightful story did not tell them otherwise. Harriet, as an employee, went along with the idea, although she knew it was the Purple Lady's spirit returning.

Several years later, Yvonne Camors, wife of Victor Camors, bought the property across the street on the corner of Front Street now North Beach Blvd. and Boardman Ave. and built a home known as the "Beehive" on the waterfront. They let the old pig yard, where the Purple Lady's soldier was buried, grow wild with many pine trees. Harriet, "Fat" Paul, and Paul Alexander loved the Camors family and crossed the street to work for them. The day they arrived, Harriet told Victor and Yvonne the Purple Lady story.

Victor and Yvonne had two children, Robert and Alice. As always, the Beehive buzzed with relatives, young and old, staying for months at a time. The Richards' house was the same, and the families became good friends. In fact, Yvonne's sister, Marcelle Loeliger, was visiting one summer when she met and later married E. V.'s disabled brother, Rupert Richards. We were always told that Uncle Rupert was a vagabond and had his legs crushed while attempting to hop aboard a freight car, but I heard another story later in my life which I will relate in time.

## Chapter 3 Elmwood owned by the Robert and Lorraine Camors Family

Years passed. Victor and Yvonne died, and the Beehive was burned to the ground. Their daughter Alice married her high school sweetheart, Richard J. Roth, and moved to New Orleans. Young Robert Camors converted the Beehive's property, which included the pig yard, and used the carriage house for a summer and holiday home.

Both the Camors and Roths had large families, nine and seven children respectively, and they grew up with sunshine days, playing, swimming, crabbing, and fishing. When the moon lit the darkness, and the aura of the Purple Lady wafted above the pig yard and Elmwood stables, they were mesmerized and terrified by the sight. They knew the story from their parents and Harriet, and they loved and knew the ephemeral purple rays were the Purple Lady's spirit shining through her grief for her dead soldier. Robert and Lorraine raised their children at Elmwood until the early 1960's when they moved to Jeanerette, LA.

## Chapter 4 My Purple Lady Encounters

I have personally experienced the phenomena of the Purple Lady on two occasions. Once when I was eight or nine, I spent the night at Elmwood with my cousin Angela Camors. We were sleeping in what was Uncle Rupert's boat bedroom. It was now my cousin Robert's room, but he was camping on the pier's settee with my brother Richard so that Angela and I got to use it. It was extremely late, but I was still awake. Suddenly, long luminous streams of purple vapors float-

ed through the windows. I knew it was the Purple Lady, and I was so frightened that I jumped out of the bed, raced to the end of the pier, and slept on the pier with Richard and Robert.

The second time I stayed with my parents in the carriage house now known as the Ant Hill. I was in the upstairs girls' bedroom with three bunk beds. I remember hearing the wind and seeing the penetrating moonlight. I looked out of the window and saw the pine trees in the pig yard swaying in the velvet darkness bathed in moonlight. I reached up to close the blinds and noticed the creamy white sky slowly turning into an eerie lavender intermingling with purple streaks. At first, I thought it was cobwebs threaded in and about the quivering pine branches, but surprisingly the purple cobwebs floated in and out and above the trees like a long veil. Then I heard a mournful wailing, and I realized it was the Purple Lady returning to our pig yard. And I knew why. She had spooked another family from Elmwood and left it shrouded in gloom.

Long ago, Harriet had told me that no other family would stay long at Elmwood because the Purple Lady would only allow a Richards or Camors descendant to reside at Elmwood Plantation.

Several people subsequently bought and loved the old plantation since the sixties when the Camors left. With much enthusiasm, they would start to restore it according to their taste. Then they would unexpectedly abandon the place leaving partially stripped columns, unplanted shrubs, shriveling in their pots, half painted shutters, and a general look of suspicion. There was always a logical explanation for the abrupt cessation of work: a death, a divorce, a bankruptcy, and so on, but the true reason was THE PURPLE LADY.

## Chapter 5 The Richards' Purple Lady

I had never met any of the Richards family, except for Uncle Rupert who had died when I was a young child. You can imagine my shock when I moved to Mandeville and discovered my next-door neighbor was E. V. Richards' grandson, Julian! One night, shortly after meeting, I asked Julian if he had ever heard of the Purple Lady of Elmwood. His eyes widened, and he exclaimed, "Oh yes, my father, aunt, and uncle told me and my cousins about the Purple Lady appearing in the moon draped trees by the stables." Then he added a new twist to the crippling of Uncle Rupert Richards. He cleared his throat and began:

"My dad told me that Uncle Rupert had been a sea captain. After leaving the sea, he still liked to dress in a captain's uniform. My grandfather, E. V., being a movie producer, had a great imagination and built a special bedroom for Uncle Rupert. Dad said it was created just like a sea captain's quarters on the ship, complete with porthole windows, bunk beds, and large table made from a ship's steering wheel."

"I had known the room," I interrupted. "I spent one night in it, and the Purple Lady went bonkers as well she should have."

Julian nodded and continued. "My father told me that one full moon night the Purple Lady soared through an attic window and down the stairs to the second floor and encountered Uncle Rupert in his captain's uniform. The Purple Lady thought it was her soldier come back to life, for she lunged, her purple veils outstretched. Uncle Rupert stepped back. My father happened to be passing in the wide hall below and saw his uncle cloaked in a purple radiance tumbling down the long stairwell. The

glow disappeared half-way, and Uncle Rupert landed in a crippled heap at the bottom of the stairs."

"Gosh, I never heard that before," I gasped.

"Well," Julian said, "there is another story I heard. The Purple Lady really was a Yankee spy posing as a nurse during the Civil War. She would drain and drink the blood of the wounded Confederate Soldiers. Then she would drag the dead men to the pig yard across the street and bury them. One evening she was caught in the act, and the Confederate wardens hung her from the stable rafter until she turned purple. The next morning when they went to get her body, she was gone."

"No," I said. "This is too farfetched to be true." I then told him Harriet's story and he shrugged, replying, "Whatever, we know there is a Purple Lady in our lives."

So, you see the Richards, Camors and Roths are all part of the Purple Lady legend, and if you are a descendant of any of these families, you too are a part of her spirit and are able to hear or feel her on certain nights in Bay Saint Louis when the moon is full and the pine trees begin to sway.

## Epilogue

In late August of 2005, Hurricane Katrina completely razed the Elmwood Plantation house and the adjacent Beehive carriage house and denuded the property of all the pine trees including those in the pig yard, leaving the Purple Lady with no earthly habitat. The Elmwood property was cleared of all remnants of its former glory, the property was subdivided, and new homes were constructed.

The Beehive property was also destroyed with Camors C. Roth retaining ownership of the front lot at the corner of North Beach Blvd. and Boardman Avenue. As of this



writing there have been no reports of paranormal activity and the current property owners have enjoyed a peaceful existence on these beautiful properties.

*Notes:*

*Individuals mentioned by name are real people, past and present.*

*Information on Elmwood Plantation can be found in reference materials of the Hancock County Historical Society.*



TOM STONE

Museum and currently on the Hancock County Historical Society's Historical Property Designation Committee.

In addition, Tom has been in a play written and produced by the Hancock County Historical Society, *The Mercy Train*.

Both organizations, Ground Zero and HCHS are very fortunate to have Tom and Joel involved with them.

## GETTING TO KNOW YOU

### M. PATRICK REEDER

A native of Texas, M. Patrick Reeder was a Specialist for the United States Navy for the past twenty years. He and his wife Cindy moved to Whispering Pines in Waveland in 2004. Their six children—five sons and one daughter—attended Bay Catholic Schools, the sons at St. Stanislaus and the daughter at Our Lady Academy. Because of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, they lost their home on Whispering Pines and moved to The Kiln.

A member of the Knights of Columbus, Patrick is a man of



PATRICK REEDER

faith and considers himself an amateur history buff and cattle farmer. He has written one novel, *Red Deer*, and is working on its sequel due in January 2025. He has also acted in the play *Sink or Be Sunk*, written and produced by the Hancock County Historical Society.

Patrick and Cindi have been members of the Hancock County Historical Society for the past several years, and Patrick is currently on the Historical Property Designation Committee. HCHS is very fortunate to have them as members.

### THOMAS STONE

Thomas (Tom) Stone and his wife Joal moved to Waveland from Houston in May of 2019 after he retired from Murphy Oil. Both natives of New Orleans, they see the Bay/Waveland area as the perfect landing spot for their retirement. They have children and grandkids who live in Mandeville, Houston, and Auckland, New Zealand.

After retiring from Murphy Oil Corporation as the Head of Graphic Design, Tom has enjoyed photographing the birds and beaches of the Gulf Coast. He has also narrated over forty-five titles (fiction and non-fiction) on Audible.com.

Tom is a Board Member of Waveland Ground Zero Hurricane

## YouTube

In January 2023, the Hancock County Historical Society created a YouTube channel containing guest speaker presentations from the Society's monthly luncheons.

The web address is [www.youtube.com/@hancockcountyhistoricalsociety](http://www.youtube.com/@hancockcountyhistoricalsociety) or you can search YouTube for "Hancock County Historical Society."

## ANNUAL CEMETERY TOUR

The Annual Cemetery Tour will be held on Halloween night, Thursday, October 31, 2024. Needed are volunteers to prepare the cemetery for the tour, to portray citizens buried there, and to act as guides. To volunteer, please call 228-467-4090. All actors and guides must be members of the Historical Society.



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Trey McCalge as Lt. Jones



David Sweet as Master Robert Ulrick, Jim Codling as John Lafitte, John Hively as Lt. Robert Speddan, John McCalge as Andrew Jackson







Jan Vest as Commodore Daniel T. Patterson



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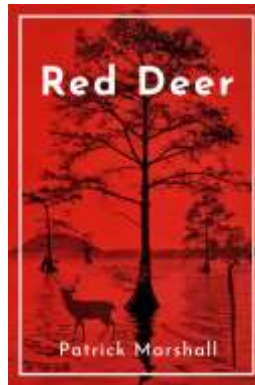


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